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DRAMATIZATIONS OF POPULAR TALES

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The writer was recently asked by an acquaintance to furnish him with a list of "dramatized novels" for reading. What was wanted was a list of published plays the fabric of which was based upon some work of fiction previously published. The writer instinctively felt that there must be quite a number of such plays extant, but when he came to draw up his list his memory was able to call up lamentably few titles. More than that, there appeared to be no compilation that would supply him with the needed information. Thus "put to his plunges," he proceeded to make a thorough search for the desired material, with the result that he soon found himself indulging in those pleasures which invariably attend pioneer research in any direction.

The drawing upon works of fiction for plots for plays appears to have been in vogue at all periods in which the drama flourished. Any comprehensive survey, therefore, of the field of such indebtedness would inevitably lead the investigator into widely divergent paths. And so, for the sake of unity, it would seem best to limit the present survey to a single national dramatic literature, first consideration being naturally given to the English.

Our starting-point must be, of course, the age of the Elizabethan dramatists. Boccaccio's *Decameron*, that foundation, masterpiece, and most extensive compilation of Italian story-telling, had already furnished the mediaeval playwrights with abundant plots; and at a later date it became one of the sources from which Hans Sachs and his fellow-dramatists drew copiously for their plots. In the Elizabethan period, too, many a playwright turned back to gather materials from this source. Shakespeare borrowed from it the substance of his comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*, besides the tale of jealousy which forms one of the concurrent plots of *Cymbeline*. In Bandello's collection of tales the Elizabethan

dramatists likewise discovered a wealth of exciting and moving episodes. Thus Marston borrowed from Bandello the story of the wicked and voluptuous Countess of Celant, and Webster that of the widowed Duchess of Malfi. Bandello, too, contains the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as the tales which Shakespeare used in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*. Another collection of novels which served as a source book for the Elizabethan playwrights was the *Hecatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio. Shakespeare's *Othello* is founded on materials taken from this source. The Elizabethans also occasionally made use of the collections of tales by Straparola, Giovanni Fiorentino, and others.

The Elizabethan dramatists, however, did not often avail themselves of the work of earlier English narrative authors. Shakespeare's *Pericles* was based ultimately on a story to be found in the eighth book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. One story—that of Palamon and Arcite—from the *Canterbury Tales* had been dramatized by Edwardes in 1566; and the same is true of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ascribed to Shakespeare and Fletcher. No English narrative work, however, was as freely exploited by the playwrights as was Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. This work contained a wealth of the most varied impressions and a plot overflowing with material. A complete presentation of all these episodes in the course of a single drama would have been impossible; and so the dramatists had to content themselves with drawing "little rivulets" from the "full stream" of Sidney, as one of them puts it. The anonymous *Mucedorus*, Day's *Isle of Gulls*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*, and Shirley's *Arcadia*, all utilize portions of Sidney's narrative. Shakespeare likewise borrowed an episode from this romance for his version of *King Lear*. Some of the dramas of the time possess plots borrowed from Greene's novels, notably Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, which has served to immortalize Greene's novel *Pandosto* in the same way that *As You Like It* immortalized a novel written by Shakespeare's fellow-playwright Lodge.

As is well known, the Renaissance dramatists made a twofold use of tales taken from classical mythology. Sometimes they modeled them into gay pageants, bright with color and enlivened with music; sometimes they strove to depict a grim tragedy on the model of Seneca and the great Attic tragedians. But the only play

founded on the grim themes of the heroic age which has survived from the repertory of the professional actors is Heywood's dramatic cycle, *The Four Ages*. Probably of a similar type were some mythological plays, now lost, of which the titles are mentioned in Henslowe's *Diary*. The *Troilus* and *Cressida* plays do not, however, belong to this category, but rather to the domain of mediaeval tradition.

The popular epic, which proved an inexhaustible source of inspiration to the romantic dramatists of Spain, was not nearly so much exploited by the Elizabethans. The figure most frequently met with in this way is, of course, Robin Hood. Mention need only be made of *George-a-Greene*, *the Pinner of Wakefield* and of *The Downfall and Death of Robert Earl of Huntington*. As for the popular ballad, Chettle, in his drama *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green*, set the example to succeeding English dramatists of borrowing plots from that source.

It was not until the dawn of the Stuart period that the masterpieces of Spanish narrative literature came to be dramatized by English playwrights with anything like frequency. The great master, Cervantes, exercised far less influence on the English stage through his *Don Quixote* than through his short tales, although *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* evidently contains reminiscences of the Spanish knight. At the same time the tale of unseemly curiosity, which is incorporated as an episode in *Don Quixote*, appears to have exercised a great power of attraction on these same dramatists.

In the subsequent course of our investigation one of the main points to be noticed is the fact that not only novels and romances, but also short stories, poems, legends, and fairy tales were utilized by English dramatists as sources for their plots. By far the greater number of plays, however, have been based on popular novels, chiefly English and French. The English novel, as is well known, began its period of literary dominance with the appearance of Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740. The middle of the eighteenth century, moreover, is marked by poverty in dramatic composition as contrasted with the strenuous advance of the novel. The dramatic revival came in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and followed close upon the heels of the great novel successes.

Scott and Dickens stand out above all other popular novelists by reason of the adaptation of their plots to dramatic uses. In Scott's case we have dramatizations of *The Abbot*, *The Antiquary*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *A Legend of Montrose*, *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, *Rob Roy*, *Rokeby*, *The Talisman*, *The Two Drovers*, *Waverley*, and *Woodstock*. Of *Kenilworth* there are at least seven dramatizations extant, and of *Ivanhoe* at least six. We have also French dramatizations of *The Abbot*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Guy Mannering*, *Kenilworth*, and *Woodstock*; German dramatizations of *Ivanhoe* and *Kenilworth*; and a Dutch dramatic version of *Kenilworth*.

Of Dickens' novels and tales we possess dramatic versions of *Barnaby Rudge*, *The Battle of Life*, *Bleak House*, *The Chimes*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *David Copperfield*, *Dombey and Son*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Message from the Sea*, *Oliver Twist*, *Pickwick Papers*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Widow's Story of the Seven Poor Travellers*; besides collected dramatizations of his works by Horace B. Browne, Guy Pertwee, Fanny Comstock, and W. Eliot Fette. Of *Barnaby Rudge*, *Oliver Twist*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, there are at least two different dramatic versions each extant.

The erstwhile popularity of Harrison Ainsworth's novels is clearly evidenced by the multiplicity of dramatizations to which they were subjected. *Crichton*, *The Flitch of Bacon*, *Jack Sheppard*, *The Miser's Daughter*, *Rookwood*, *The Tower of London*, and *Windsor Castle* were variously dramatized. Of *Jack Sheppard* alone no less than eight dramatic versions were produced almost simultaneously in the autumn of 1839. At least three of these were published and are still extant. We have also three dramatic versions of *The Miser's Daughter*. *Rookwood* was dramatized for three different theaters, but no dramatic version appears ever to have been published. Two dramatic versions of *The Tower of London* are extant.

Bulwer-Lytton's *Ernest Maltravers*, *Eugene Aram*, *Last Days of Pompeii*, *Night and Morning*, *Paul Clifford*, and *Rienzi* were dramatized, and the published versions are still extant. *Eugene Aram*, besides being adapted by the dramatist Moncrieff, was also dramatized by Bulwer-Lytton himself.

There are extant dramatic adaptations of Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pilot*, *The Red Rover*, and *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*; also of Wilkie Collins' *Armada*, *The Frozen Deep*, and *No Name*; of Miss Braddon's *Henry Dunbar*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Only a Clod*; and of Lover's *Handy Andy* and *Rory O'More*. Of Miss Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Lover's *Handy Andy* we have two dramatic versions each.

Both *Dred* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe were dramatized and the dramas published. *Don Quixote* appears in a dramatization entitled *The Comical History of Don Quixote* by Thomas D'Urfey under date of 1729, and it was later dramatized also by George Almar. Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* exists in at least seven different dramatic versions, three of them being in foreign languages. The most recent English version is that by Marguerite Merington, which was published in 1909. Dramatic versions of Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* were made and published by John Kerr and Charles Burke, and recently also Joseph Jefferson's acting version was published. The important latter-day English novelist whose tales have appeared in published dramatic form is Thomas Hardy. A recently published bibliography of his works lists two dramatic versions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and one each of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Three Strangers*.

A number of other British and American novelists have had one or two of their stories adapted for stage presentation, notably Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Charles Reade's *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, Warren's *Ten Thousand a Year*, Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Alcott's *Little Men* and *Little Women*, Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, Mrs. Opie's *Ruffian Boy*, R. M. Bird's *Nick of the Woods*, J. P. Kennedy's *Horseshoe Robinson*, Mayne Reid's *Headless Horseman*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford*, Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Birds' Christmas Carol*, Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire*, and John Bennett's *Master Skylark*. Published versions of all of these are available.

French romances appear also to have been great favorites with English dramatic adapters. Dumas and Hugo, of course, occupy

first and second place respectively. The interested reader will find dramatic versions of Dumas' *Chevalier de Maison Rouge* by Hazlewood, of *The Corsican Brothers* by Boucicault, of *The Man in the Iron Mask* by W. J. Lucas, of *The Count of Monte Cristo* by an unknown hand, of *The Three Musketeers* by Charles Rice, of the *Vicomte de Bragelonne* by F. W. Hayes, and of *The Regent's Daughter* reputedly by W. Young. Hugo's *Les Misérables* has two English dramatic versions, besides French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish dramatizations, to its credit; while *Notre Dame* has an English dramatic version as well as one in French.

Le Sage's *Gil Blas* was dramatized by Edward Moore of Abingdon as early as 1751, and we have also a later dramatic adaptation by George Macfarren. Planché made a one-act extravaganza out of Fénelon's *Adventures of Telemachus*. Tom Taylor dramatized two tales of Charles de Bernard under the titles of *Still Waters Run Deep* and *Retribution*. Octave Feuillet's *Romance of a Poor Young Man* was dramatized, once by Pierrepont Edwards and Lester Wallack and independently (under the title of *Maxime*) by W. Creyke. And Madame Girardin's *Une Femme Qui Déteste Son Mari* was dramatized by Tom Taylor as *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*.

J. R. Planché was a great dramatic adapter of fairy tales. His list of plays in this line includes the Countess d'Aulnoy's *The Bee and the Orange Tree*, *Belle-Belle*, *The Beneficent Frog*, *The Blue Bird*, *The Fair One with the Golden Locks*, *The Fawn in the Forest*, *The Golden Branch*, *Graciosa and Percinet*, *The Green Serpent*, *Prince Sprite*, *Princess Carpillon*, *Princess Rosette*, and *The Yellow Dwarf*, Perrault's *Blue Beard*, *The Discreet Princess*, *Puss in Boots*, *Riquet of the Tuft*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*, Mlle de la Force's *Good Woman*, and the Countess of Murat's *Jeune et Belle*, as also the anonymous *Beauty and the Beast* and *The White Cat*. Other dramatic adaptations of fairy tales deserving of mention are those of Andersen's *Little Mermaid* by Edward Sheldon (dramatized as *The Garden of Paradise*), of Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by Jessie Braham, of Perrault's *Blue Beard* by George Colman the Younger and also by Marguerite Merington, of *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood* by Marguerite Merington, and of *Prince Dorus* by Tom Taylor.

Several tales from the *Arabian Nights* have likewise been dramatized. There are dramatic versions of *Aladdin* by George Soane and by J. R. O'Neill; of *Ali Baba* by O'Neill, and also by Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Colman the Younger conjointly; and of *Camar-al-Zaman* by H. J. Byron.

Saints' legends have been employed in dramatic compositions in at least five instances. The legend of St. Dorothea figures in Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, that of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Dryden's *Tyrannic Love*, St. Polyeucte in Corneille's *Polyeucte Martyr*, St. Patrick in Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland*, and the Seven Champions of Christendom in a tragi-comedy of that name by John Kirke (1638), as also in a comic fantastic spectacle by Planché.

When we turn to poems that have been adapted into plays, we find Sir Walter Scott again taking the lead. His *Lady of the Lake* appears in dramatic versions by Thomas J. Dibdin, E. J. Eyre, Thomas Morton, and Robert Reece. There are also dramatic versions of *Marmion* and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* has been preserved in dramatic form by J. S. Coyne and also by Arthur Matthison. Southey's *Thalaba*, Byron's *Mazeppa*, and Longfellow's *Hiawatha* are likewise extant in dramatic versions. And Homer's *Odyssey* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* have latterly found their English dramatic adapters, the one in the person of Stephen Phillips, the other in Percy MacKaye.

We have already seen that the Elizabethan dramatists utilized the Robin Hood ballads for their plays. The vogue of these ballads in drama has continued to recent times, as is evidenced by Tennyson's *Foresters* and Alfred Noyes's play entitled *Sherwood*. Of other English dramas founded on old ballads, mention might also be made of John Home's *Douglas*, A. L. V. Campbell's *Tom Bowling*, and J. B. Buckstone's *Billy Taylor*.

The old Norse sagas have found an English dramatic adapter in Frederick I. Winbolt, who in recent years has composed the dramas of *King Helge*, *Aslog*, and *Frithiof the Bold* from materials taken from that source.

A few instances of dramatized works of fiction reveal the added interesting fact that novelists may, on occasion, become their

own dramatic adapters. This has been true of Bulwer-Lytton, who first composed *Eugene Aram* as a novel and then as a tragedy; of Harriet Lee's *Kruitznier*, H. A. Vachell's *Her Son* and *Quinnys*, and finally of Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Birds' Christmas Carol*, although in the last instance the author acknowledges the collaboration of Helen Ingersoll.

That there is little likelihood of this practice of dramatizing works of fiction ceasing in the near future would seem to be indicated by the fact that present-day dramatists have contributed, and are still contributing, their share to the already large output. Passing mention has already been made of the work in this direction by Stephen Phillips, Percy MacKaye, Alfred Noyes, Edward Sheldon, and Marguerite Merington. This list could be extended by the addition of such names as Mrs. Steele MacKaye, Anna M. Lütkenhaus, Edgar White Burrill, Richard Harding Davis, and Valérie Wyngate.

It will, no doubt, have already occurred to the reader that the opposite practice, namely the novelization of plays, has existed side by side with that of the dramatization of novels. Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* is the classic instance of this in its own particular field. Successors to it have appeared in Marmaduke E. Browne's *Tales from the Old Dramatists* and Charles Morris' *Tales from the Dramatists*. Of individual play-novelizations we might mention *The Shaughraun* by H. L. Williams, founded on Boucicault's play of the same name; *The Lady of Lyons* and *Cardinal Richelieu*, novelized from the dramas of Bulwer-Lytton; *Luke Somerton*, a romance founded on Soane's play of that name; *Blanche Heriot*, novelized from Albert Smith's play by Miss Clara Reeve; *The Fool's Revenge*, *The Serf*, and *Bob Brierley or the Ticket-of-Leave Man*, novelized from Tom Taylor's plays by H. L. Williams; and *The Carpet-Bagger* by Opie Read and Frank Pixley.

This survey of the English drama's intimate connection with fiction opens up a number of interesting paths for literary speculation, to pursue which the present article does not purpose to attempt. Suffice it to hope that a few guideposts have been erected whereby future investigators may be able to find their way more quickly as well as more surely.